UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/AC.51/1994/L.7/Add.26
9 September 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE FOR PROGRAMME
AND COORDINATION
Thirty-fourth session (Part II)
29 August-16 September 1994
Agenda item 8

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE SECOND PART OF ITS THIRTY-FOURTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Tae Hyun YOO (Republic of Korea)

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS

1. At its 16th, 17th and 18th meetings, on 1 and 2 September 1994, the Committee considered the prototype of a new format of the medium-term plan (A/49/301).

2. The Committee noted that the prototype was developed in response to the recommendations made by the Committee, and by the General Assembly in its resolution 48/218 of 23 December 1993. It was recalled that, while the current system had been intended to impose a discipline on programme managers and to provide a process for consultation with and among Member States, its effectiveness had, over a number of years, been called increasingly into question, both within the Secretariat and among Member States.

3. The Committee also noted that the schedule for preparation of the new medium-term plan would not allow it to be adopted any sooner than 1996, since 1995 is the year when the proposed programme budget for 1996-1997 is to be presented to the General Assembly for approval. The new medium-term plan, once adopted in 1996, would provide the framework for the preparation of the programme budget for 1998-1999.

94-35734 (E) 130994

130994

/...

Discussion

4. Many delegations welcomed the prototype and concurred in the attempt to make the medium-term plan a more useful and responsive instrument for meeting the current and future objectives of the Organization.

5. Some delegations took note with interest of document A/49/301, and stressed the need to undertake a wide process of intergovernmental consultations in order to improve the prototype as well as to clarify some of its elements, in particular those related to the process of intergovernmental consultations, the structure of the programmes and the designation of priorities at the level of the subprogrammes, et cetera.

6. Many delegations welcomed the focus on objectives and the means to achieve them rather than on detailed descriptions of activities and outputs as had been the case in the past and noted that the proposed congruence between the plan and the Secretariat structure would facilitate the determination of responsibility and accountability of organizational units for their programmes. Some others expressed the view that the new approach should not imply the idea that the cost-benefit relationship is the sole criterion.

7. Many delegations also agreed that the perspective document would be a forward-looking, strategic document.

8. At the same time, a number of delegations expressed concern that the description of the perspective document, as presented in paragraph 6 of the report of the Secretary-General on the prototype, did not accurately reflect the recommendation of the General Assembly as presented in paragraph 3 (a) of the report.

9. It was the view of many delegations that the perspective must take fully into account an analysis of persistent problems as well as of emerging trends, and that the balance between the two must be scrupulously observed. It was felt that the formulation of the medium-term plan, including the perspective, should be an interactive process between Member States and the Secretariat, with the view to achieving the widest possible agreement.

10. Some delegations were of the view that the perspective document should have a sectoral approach and not be presented according to organizational structures as is proposed for the programme framework. Other delegations were of the view that a sectoral approach might result in too lengthy a document and that the focus should rather be on the future policy direction of the work of the Organization.

11. One delegation stressed the need for flexibility and preparation for change in the programme planning process. The perspective, as well as the programme framework, would be the subject of revision every second year. In the intervening period, new departures and major new projects could be reflected, as required, in addenda to the medium-term plan.

12. Some delegations expressed their concern about the possibility of elimination of subprogrammes whose activities have been mandated by the General

Assembly. In this context, they expressed the need to preserve those subprogrammes that have their own identity.

13. Many delegations stressed the need for the medium-term plan to be as concise as possible. Some delegations were of the view that the length of the document was not an end in itself but should only be determined by the coverage of the issues to be addressed.

14. Some delegations expressed serious reservations regarding the proposals for the programme framework and indicated that, in their view, this aspect would need to be thoroughly debated in the Fifth Committee. In that context, those delegations regretted that, in the proposals contained in annex II of the report of the Secretary-General, the Secretariat had included elements on which intergovernmental agreement had not been reached.

Conclusions and recommendations

15. The Committee welcomed the proposed new format of the medium-term plan, which would consist of a perspective and a programme framework for a period of four years, beginning in 1998 on the understanding that:

(a) Annexes I and II of document A/49/301 were for illustrative purposes only;

(b) The relevant legislative mandates should be indicated in the narrative of the programmes;

(c) The narrative of the subprogrammes should reflect all the mandated activities.

16. The Committee recommended that the perspective should strictly observe the balance between persistent problems and emerging trends and should be presented, therefore, according to the following structure:

(a) Persistent problems: these would be derived from an analysis of the longstanding problems that the Organization would continue to address;

(b) Emerging trends: these would be derived from an analysis of the current situation;

(c) Identification of challenges: this would address the old and new issues faced by the international community, based on the persistent problems and emerging trends;

(d) Role of the Organization: this would identify the contributions that the Organization could make in addressing the persistent problems, the emerging trends and the existing as well as new challenges;

(e) Directions to be pursued: this would outline in broad terms the courses of action that would need to be taken and the priority areas to be addressed.

17. The Committee stressed the necessity to observe and deliver all mandated activities.

18. The Committee stressed the need for further consultations with Member States and noted that, upon approval by the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session of the new format, the Secretariat would begin drafting the plan for review, where feasible, by the specialized intergovernmental bodies prior to consideration by the Committee at its thirty-sixth session.

19. The Committee noted that insufficient attention had been given in the past to evaluation and that the new format would facilitate evaluation of programmes, in view of the emphasis on the formulation of clear objectives and results to be achieved.